



A Hero of Our Time

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Mikhail Yurevich Lermontov (1814 - 1841)
translated by Marr Murray and J. H. Wisdom

One of the iconic characters of all Russian literature, Grigori Aleksandrovich Pechorin is the ultimate “superfluous man.” An aristocratic rake who loves the game of manipulating the lives of those around him, he callously kidnaps a Chechen teenager to be his bride, wagers the life of an inveterate gambler in a kind of philosophical Russian roulette, and engages in dangerous games with Crimean smugglers. A

Hero of Our Time is really a collection of stories rather than a novel, culminating in the brilliant psychological novella “Princess Mary,” in which Pechorin toys tragically with the loves of two fragile women and sacrifices the life of his own friend for the sake of his own sociopathic amusement. In the process, he dissects his own motives with a kind of ruthless, surgical precision through which occasionally we see the human soul of a man in agony, who might not really want to be what he has become and who grieves over the loss of his own capacity for love and compassion.



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